

Washington, DC – Congressman Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) released the following statement today after Hiawatha native Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta received the Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony. Giunta is the first living soldier to receive the military's most prestigious combat medal for service in Iraq or Afghanistan. Braley attended the ceremony.

"Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta represents the absolute best our military has to offer and all Iowans should be proud of his service," Braley said. "At a time when any other person might have taken cover, Staff Sgt. Giunta put himself directly in the line of fire to rescue a fellow soldier. While Staff Sgt. Giunta has described himself as 'average' and 'mediocre,' his courage, leadership and selfless action paint a more accurate picture of the man we honor today. On behalf of all First District Iowans, I want to congratulate Staff Sgt. Giunta on this tremendous honor and thank him for his extraordinary service."

According to the White House, Giunta is recognized for the following action:

Then-Specialist Salvatore A. Giunta distinguished himself by acts of gallantry at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a rifle team leader with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment during combat operations against an armed enemy in the Korengal Valley, Afghanistan on October 25, 2007.

When an insurgent force ambush split Specialist Giunta's squad into two groups, he exposed himself to enemy fire to pull a comrade back to cover. Later, while engaging the enemy and attempting to link up with the rest of his squad, Specialist Giunta noticed two insurgents carrying away a fellow soldier. He immediately engaged the enemy, killing one and wounding the other, and provided medical aid to his wounded comrade while the rest of his squad caught up and provided security. His courage and leadership while under extreme enemy fire were integral to his platoon's ability to defeat an enemy ambush and recover a fellow American paratrooper from enemy hands.